XVII

NOTICES ON THE "FRANKISH CHANCRE" (SYPHILIS) IN YEMEN, EGYPT, AND PERSIA

It is well known to those who have studied Arabian medicine that there is no clinical description of either syphilis or gonorrhoea in early Arabic medical writings. H. P. J. Renaud and G. S. Colin in their careful study, *Documents marocains pour servir à l'histoire du "Mal Franc"*[1] have cited Dāwūd al-Anṭākī's statement in his *Nuẓhah*[2] that syphilis was first seen in Arabia in 807 H. (A.D. 1404–5), but they do not concur with him that this could have been at so early a date, holding that 907 H. (A.D. 1501–2) should be substituted instead, and that his 807 H. is simply an error. Most, but not all of the evidence at my disposal tends to confirm their view. In Egypt, says Dāwūd al-Anṭākī, the "Frankish chancre" (*al-ḥabb al-Ifranjī*) is known as "*al-Mubārak*", "the blessed", or "the lucky"; amongst certain Arabs and in the Hejaz it is called "*al-Shajar*", "the tree". A special type is distinguished by the epithet "*al-Ḍānī*" but my own very clear MS of this treatise reads "*al-Ṣannānī*", perhaps incorrectly. It is a disease, he says, which was first known from the people of Firanjah from whom it was transmitted; people of latter days link it to the Persian Fire (*al-nār al-Fārisī*), but this is simply ignorance.

Ibn Īyās (to whom reference is made at second-hand by the two authors), after describing 903 H. (A.D. 1497–8) as a year of calamity and disaster, adds,[3]

> And as if all of this were not enough, a disease called "*al-Ḥabb al-Ifranjī*" (the Frankish chancre), God preserve us from it, spread among the people, the physicians being unable to cope with it, nor had it ever before appeared in Egypt except in the opening (years) of this century, and through it perished an untold number of people.

So, it would seem, the disease, commencing about 900 H. (A.D. 1494–5), rose to epidemic proportions a few years later, though

[1] Institut des Hautes Études Marocaines (Paris, 1935), XXVII, 12.

[2] Cf. Brockelmann, *GAL.* II, 364, *Sup.* II, 491 f. A MS copy of his *Tadhkirah* is also to be found in the Āl Bin Sahl library in Tarīm.

[3] M. Sobernheim, P. Kahle and Muhammed Mustafa, *Die Chronik des Ibn Ijâs*, dritter Teil, Bibliotheca Islamica, v, c (Leipzig, 1936), 386.

nowadays, of course, syphilis would not, in itself, be considered a mortal disease.

Whether it spread to Arabia from Egypt or from some other quarter is not yet known, but only a few years later, in the entries for the year 909 H. (A.D. 1503–4) the Ḥaḍramī chronicler of *al-Nūr al-sāfir*,[1] as also his compatriot Bā Faqīh al-Shiḥrī,[2] records:

In this year the prayer on the *minbar* of the *khaṭīb* continued and his supplication was raised for the removal of the chancres known as the "Persian fire" which had afflicted people (*kashf mā ḥalla bi-'l-nās min al-ḥubūb al-ma'rūfah bi-'l-nār al-Fārisī*). This had been common (*kathura*) in the land of the Yemen, increased, left the people, returned, and continued with them until the first (part) of the year 906 H. (A.D. 1500–1), and subsequently, breasts thereby being straitened and spirits oppressed.

The same chronicle[3] further refers to pestilence at Zabīd in the same year, mostly in women and infants, though it is not precisely stated what sickness this was: again, in 908 H. (A.D. 1502–3) a sickness known as *al-sh m n d lah* manifested itself in Zabīd and Aden and their environs and in the mountains, but this mysterious, apparently foreign word, unknown to the lexicons I have consulted, does not, as far as can be judged, appear to indicate any known venereal disease. It is described as an ache (*rīḥ*) which takes grip of the joints and limbs, preventing any movement for three days, which may be accompanied by fever, then it goes away and one is all right.

The history of the "mal franc" in Egypt whence Egyptian troops or Red Sea merchants and mariners may have taken it to Arabia in the campaigns of the time, is carried a stage further in the section of Ibn Īyās's chronicle in which are recorded Mameluke preparations to capture the Yemen as part of the counter-attack they proposed to launch on the Portuguese who were probing their way around the South Arabian coast and up the Red Sea. Notices of their activities commence with the year 911 H. (A.D. 1505–6), and in 921 H. (A.D. 1515–16) Ibn Īyās says:[4]

On Tuesday the 20th of it (Jumādā I) the Sulṭān disbursed (*nafaqa*) subsistence money for the voyage (*nafaqat al-safar*) to the troops posted to

[1] Ibn al-'Aidarūs, *al-Nūr al-sāfir* (Baghdad, 1934), p. 52.

[2] Fol. 22*b* of my MS, Mukallā MS, p. 52. For this author cf. my *Portuguese off the South Arabian Coast* (Oxford, 1963), pp. 37 f.

[3] *Ibid.* pp. 44 and 51.

[4] Ed. Mohamed Mostafa, *Die Chronik des Ibn Iyâs*, vierter Teil, Bibl. Isl. v. d (Cairo, 1960), pp. 459 and 460.

India. He gave each Mamlūk 50 dīnārs, promising them that he would disburse 6 months' pay (*jāmakīyah*) to them in advance (*mu'ajjal*). It is said that from among them he exempted a number of the sons of (eminent) people (*awlād al-nās*)[1] on account of their complaining of physical debility, or those who had Frankish chancre. He began to make declaration to them publicly, saying, "Any man who is unable to make the voyage on the Salt Sea (*Baḥr al-Maliḥ/al-Milḥ*) should inform me of this and I shall exempt him from the voyage". This was accounted one of his good traits.

On Tuesday the 5th of it (Jumādā II) the Sulṭān disbursed four months' pay in advance to the troops posted to India. There were some of them who complained that they had the Frankish chancre (*al-ḥabb al-Ifranjī*) and were unable to make the voyage, so the Sulṭān exempted them from the voyage, saying to them, "Return the subsistence money (*nafaqah*) you have taken and do not make the voyage". Sometimes he bound (*rassam*) certain of the sons of (eminent) people[1] until they returned the 50 Ashrafīs which they had taken as subsistence money, saying to them, "Any man unable to make the voyage on account of his debility will return the subsistence money and not make the voyage". The total number of these troops enrolled (*kutiba*) for India was about 500 men, apart from the *Tarākimah*[2] sailors (*baḥḥārah*) of the Ra'īs Salmān's contingent (*jamā'ah*).

Something of the social problems created by the introduction of syphilis into Southern Arabia may be realized from a *fatwā* extracted from the collection of the Yemenite *faqīh*, Ibn Ja'mān (ob. 1034 H. (A.D. 1624–5)),[3] who flourished from towards the end of the tenth/sixteenth century well into that which followed. As will be seen below, the authorities he cites belong roughly to the first half of the tenth/sixteenth century.[4]

مسئلة : عن هذه العلّة الّتى ظهرت وانتشرت فى الدّيار اليمنيّة المسمّاة بالحبّ، وعند قوم بالدُّرْب، وعند آخر بنار فارس، المشهورة بالاعدى[5]، ولو

[1] "Egyptian-born sons and grandsons of emirs" according to W. Popper, *Egypt and Syria under the Circassian Sultans*, Univ. of California Publications in Semitic Philology (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1957), XVI, 115. *Ibn nās* also seems to be used in the Yemen in the sense of a person of good family at the present time.

[2] It has been proposed to me that *Turkmān* has sometimes the significance of "Ottomans" in Egyptian Arabic texts of this period, a sense that appears appropriate here.

[3] For this author cf. my *Portuguese*, index.

[4] My MS, fol. 270*a*. The *tashkīl*, in some cases the *tanqīṭ*, and the punctuation are mine.

[5] Properly الإعداء.

بعد البرا[1]، إذا وقع فى الزّوج، وطلبت الزّوجة الفسخ، هل تُجاب إلى ذالك ويُسَوَّغ لها، قياسًا على الجذام والبَرَص، أم بينهنّ فرق؟ فإذا قلتم: تجاب إلى ذالك. وهل يجب للمدخول بها، إذا طلبت الفسخ للنكاح بهذا العيب، المهر المسمّى، أم لا؟

أجاب شيخنا رحمه اللّه تعالى: لا يثْبُت بالمرض فسخ النّكاح، لا بحَضَارة[2] فى العيوب السّبعة، ولا يلحق بها المرض المذكور ولا غيره. وبه أفتى شيخ مشايخنا العلّامة وجيه الدّين خاتمة المحقّقين عبد الرّحمن ابن زياد، رحمه اللّه تعالى. وسئل عن ثبوت الخيار به أيضاً شيخنا العلّامة جمال الدّين محمّد بن أبى بكر الأشخر، رحمه اللّه تعالى. فأجاب بما حاصله أنّ الحبّ الفارسّى المعروف بالشحر[3] لا يثبت الخيار به فى النّكاح؛ بل هو كالبَخَر والصُّنَان. ثمّ قال: قلت ذالك مع اطّلاعى على فتوى بعض العلمآء بثبوت الخيار، وهو غير مبنىّ على القواعد المذهبيّة رأسًا — حتّى لو حكم شافعىّ به نقض. (انتهى) وهو صريح فيما أجبت به. واللّه عزّ وجلّ أعلم.

QUESTION: Concerning this malady which has appeared and spread abroad in Yemenite territory, called "*al-ḥabb*" (the chancre),[4] and by some people "*al-dhirb*" (the ganglion), and by others "Fire of Persia", notorious for its infection, even after the cure—when it occurs in the husband, and the wife demands annulment, is her petition complied with, and is it made lawful to her, by analogy with leprosy and white leprosy,[5] or is there a difference between them? Furthermore, if you say, "She is met with compliance in the matter", is a woman who has been penetrated due the dower named (in the marriage-contract) if she demand annulment of the marriage on account of this defect, or not?

THE RESPONSE of our shaikh, God rest him, was: Annulment of

[1] For بَرء or بَرَاء, though according to Lane the latter *maṣdar* is used in another sense.

[2] MS بحضاره.

[3] *Sic*, but read *al-shajar*.

[4] One is to understand here "*al-ḥabb al-Ifranjī*". The name *dhirb* may have been given it because the primary chancre is like a nodule.

[5] It is to be remarked that Dāwūd al-Anṭākī, *Nuzhah* (cf. Renaud and Colin, *op. cit.* p. 12) states that *al-ḥabb al-Ifranjī* should be placed after *judhām*, leprosy, perhaps considering that there is some resemblance of one to the other.

the marriage is not validated by sickness, nor by (its) being found in the (category of the) seven defects,[1] nor does the aforementioned disease or any other fall within their category. The shaikh of our shaikhs, the very learned, eminent in the faith, seal of those who have reached the knowledge of mighty verities,[2] 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ziyād, God rest him, issued a legal opinion in this sense. Moreover, our shaikh, the very learned Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr al-Ashkhar was questioned on the validity of option in this matter (*sc.* annulment), and he gave a response, the gist of which is that option in marriage in the case of the Persian chancre known as "*al-ṣhajar*" (the tree)[3] is invalid; indeed on the contrary, it resembles halitosis and fetor.[4] Then he said, "This statement I make, notwithstanding my having perused the legal opinion of one of the authorities that option is valid, for fundamentally it is not based on the tenets of the sect, so that even had Shāfi'ī (himself) given a decision in favour of its (validity) he would have been controverted" (concluded). It is explicit, in accordance with the response I have given—but God is most knowing.

Ibn Ziyād, cited by Ibn Ja'mān, was a celebrated *'ālim* and *ṣūfī* whose biography is to be found in very considerable detail and length in Ibn al-'Aidarūs, *al-Nūr al-sāfir*,[5] his name being 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Abd al-Karīm...al-Ghaithī al-Muqṣirī (?) al-Zabīdī.[6] He is the author of many legal works as noticed by Brockelmann, and I have myself seen MSS of his legal treatises in Ḥaḍramī libraries.[7] Ibn Ziyād appears to have been at variance in legal questions and quibbles (*mukhālafat wa-mushāḥaḥāt fī masā'il*) with the even more famous Ibn Ḥajar al-Haitamī who flourished from 911 H. (A.D. 1505) to 973 H. (A.D. 1565) or later, while Ibn Ziyād lived from 900 H. (A.D. 1495) to 975 H. (A.D. 1568).

[1] See below.

[2] I have taken *muḥaqqiq* in the Ṣūfī sense cited by Dozy, *Supplément*, though it could presumably mean here one who verifies with precision and exactitude.

[3] The term quoted by Dāwūd al-Anṭākī above, and evidently used in Zabīd also. Al-Anṭākī spent his latter days in Mecca.

[4] Bakhar is the stench of the breath, *ṣunān* is the smell of the arm-pits and creases of the body, as, e.g. in Jāḥiẓ, *Ḥayawān* (Cairo, 1938–47), I, 226, *ṣunān 'araqi-hā* of young goats. Though unaesthetic these defects do not justify annulment of a marriage.

[5] *Op. cit.* pp. 305–14.

[6] Cf. Brock. *GAL.* II, 404, *Sup.* II, 555. 'Umar b. Yūsuf b. Rasūl, *Ṭurfat al-aṣḥāb* (Damascus, 1949) reads Muqaṣṣir/Muqaṣṣar.

[7] In the Āl Bin Sahl Library in Tarīm (cf. "Materials for South Arabian History", I, *B.S.O.A.S.* (1950), XIII, II, 286), I saw *Ḥall al-ma'qūd fī aḥkām al-mafqūd*, and *Fatḥ al-ṣamad 'alā Sharḥ al-ẓubad*.

Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr al-Ashkhar (ob. 991 H., A.D. 1583)[1] was a pupil both of Ibn Ziyād and Ibn Ḥajar al-Haitamī, the author also of a volume of *fatāwā*, an example of which I noted in 1954 in the *waqf* library of the late Sulṭān 'Alī b. Ṣalāḥ al-Qu'aiṭī in Qaṭn, the end portion being missing. I have speculated whether the allusion in his Response to a difference of opinion with another scholar might not refer to Ibn Ḥajar, but in such works of the latter as I have perused I have not lighted upon this topic.

Ibn Ziyād was of the Maqāṣirah tribe, a branch of 'Akk b. 'Adnān, born in Zabīd where he held office and ultimately died. Though syphilis would first have manifested itself in Zabīd when he was a small child, his *fatwā* itself would most likely have been issued nearer the height of his career when he had achieved rank and authority, and, of course, when the symptoms of the disease itself had become well recognized.

The seven defects which validate the annulment of a marriage are doubtless enumerated in certain of the Shāfi'ī legal manuals but in my MS of the *Mishkāt al-miṣbāḥ, sharḥ al-'Iddah wa-'l-silāḥ*[2] of 'Afīf al-Dīn 'Abdullāh b. 'Umar b. 'Abdullāh Makhramah al-Ḥaḍramī (ob. 972 H., A.D. 1564–5) it is stated that the *arkān al-nikāḥ* include freedom from the defects invalidating option to annul the marriage, these being white leprosy (*baraṣ*), *judhām* (leprosy) which are confirmed, insanity, and weakness of the faculties through the effect of disease (*ighmā'*). These defects in either sex are discussed with reference to the *Ḥadīth* in Ṣāliḥ b. Ghālib al-Qu'aiṭī al-Yāfi'ī's *Maṣādir al-aḥkām al-shar'īyah*,[3] but in Ḥaḍramī manuals on forms of plea,[4] however, only such defects as exist in a woman are cited, and the sole example of a plea which

[1] Cf. Brock. *Sup.* II, 548. His biography is given in *al-Nūr al-sāfir*, pp. 390–404.

[2] MS p. 73. The *K. al-'Iddah wa-'l-silāḥ fī aḥkām al-nikāḥ* is by Abū 'Abdullāh, Muḥ. b. Aḥmad b. 'Abdullāh b. Muḥ. b. 'Alī Abū Faḍl al-Ḥaḍramī, and is apparently unknown to Brockelmann. There is an example in the Āl Kāf Library in Tarīm (cf. *B.S.O.A.S. loc. cit.*). Apart from my own copy of the commentary by Bā Makhramah, there is an example in the Āl Kāf Library at Saiwūn. The author of the *K. al-'Iddah*, a Bā Faḍl shaikh describes himself in the Tarīm copy as being *al-Yamanī al-'Adanī mawṭin-an*. The title of his work is in the nature of an academic pleasantry—*The powder-horn and the gun concerning the laws of marriage*. Brock. *Sup.* II, 972 notes by 'A. b. 'A. al-Hijrānī al-'Adanī a work with the same title as the commentary, Ind. Off. 1724. For the commentary and its author see also *al-Sanā' al-bāhir* (B.M. MS), fols. 327*b* f.

[3] (Cairo, 1948–50), III, 178 f.

[4] Cf. my "Forms of plea, a Šāfi'ī manual from al-Šiḥr", *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* (Roma, 1955), XXX, I–II, 13.

a woman can prefer in favour of annulment is when her husband is unable to support her. Is one to infer that, in practice as opposed to theory, a woman will not seek annulment of her marriage for any other cause?

In Saiwūn about 1954 I purchased a Yemenite medical MS containing three treatises,[1] the first a handsome example of the *Nuẓhah* of Dāwūd b. 'Umar al-Anṭākī,[2] the source already drawn upon by Renaud and Colin, the second an anonymous dictionary of medicaments, and the third, anonymous also, a treatise on *al-Nār al-Fārisī*, i.e. syphilis.[3]

The second treatise I have not identified; perhaps it might be an original Yemenite composition,[4] which I doubt, but the third treatise of sixteen folios was transcribed in 1170 H. (A.D. 1756–7), i.e. before the *Nuẓhah* along with which it is bound. This latter treatise appears almost identical with the mid-sixteenth-century Persian work, *Risāla-i ātishak* of 'Imād al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Mas'ūd b. Maḥmūd al-Ṭabīb which I have consulted in Dr Cyril Elgood's translation.[5] Even before the identification I had begun to suspect that my treatise must be a translation on account of the

[1] An annotation on the fly-leaf states that the MS was "nusikha bi-'ināyat mawlā-nā Amīr al-Mu'minīn...al-Mahdī li-Dīn Allāh...al-'Abbās b....al-Manṣūr bi-'llāh...al-Ḥusain b....al-Mutawakkil 'ala 'llāh". The Imām al-Mahdī li-Dīn Allāh flourished between the years 1131–1189 H. (A.D. 1718/19–1775/6). A marginal note on the title-page states that this volume came from the library of the Splendour of the Age, King of the province of the Yemen, the Commander of the Faithful, son of the Commander of the Faithful, al-Mahdī li-Dīn Allāh (*min khizānat bahjat al-zaman mālik quṭr al-Yaman*).

[2] The *Nuẓhah* is copied in fine *naskh* hand on gold-sprinkled paper, with ruled margins in red and gold, rubrications, etc., but the two other treatises are written in a cruder South Arabian hand without ornament, apart from rubrications. The paper of all three treatises is similar, watermarked with a vertical line of three crescents. A note states that the MS was transcribed on the 29th Muharram 1173 H. (A.D. 1759–60). Its present fine if rather damaged binding case does not fit it and may have been taken from another MS.

[3] Though, as mentioned above, Dāwūd al-Anṭākī denies the correctness of this term as applied to syphilis.

[4] The anonymous author does however mention, for instance, treatment for "the remains of *ḥabb al-Ifranj* and *al-nār al-Fārisī* commonly known as *al-shajar*". The last being an Arabian term it may be an Arabian composition or adaptation. This stage of the disease is treated by raising the temperature to perspiration point and administering "Chinese wood".

[5] C. Elgood, "Translation of a Persian Monograph on Syphilis", *Annals of Medical History* (London, September 1931), III, no. 57, 405–86. The monograph in question is the *Risāla-i-ātishak* of 'Imād al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Mas'ūd b. Maḥmūd al-Ṭabīb (B.M. MS Add. 19619).

bad Arabic in which it is couched, containing errors of a type not to be made by a native Arab, but rather by a foreigner imperfectly acquainted with the language. The MS commences:

الحمد لله العلى العظيم . . . وبعد هذه رساله وجيزه فى معرفه انواع النار الفارسى وحب الافرنج وحب الارمنى المسهور بالشحر عند العرب وبالفارسيه اتشك واسامه وطرق حدوثه وعلاماته واسبابه وعلاجاته .

Praise to God. . . . This is a brief treatise on the recognition of the various types of Persian fire and the Frankish chancre and the Armenian chancre known as *al-Shajar* by the Arabs and in Persian as *Ātishak* (lit. fire), its names, incidence, symptoms, causes, and treatment.

He goes on to state that the Persians,

on account of this burning (which accompanies the early stage of the disease) give (it) the name *ātishak*, and they call (it) the chancre of the Franks (*ḥabb al-Ifranj*) because the original place in which this disease appeared was from the land of the Franks, and they (the Persians) call it the chancre of the Armenian, because the Armenians are afflicted with this malady and it is common (*kathīrah*) in their country.

The use of the term "fire (*ātishak*)" may be compared with the slang word "fireship" of eighteenth-century England, but perhaps this was not the earliest term used in Persia. Up to the present it had been considered by writers on the subject that there were no references to syphilis in Persia prior to 'Imād al-Dīn, *c.* A.D. 1550, but Professor Minorsky's publication of a translation of the biography of a certain Sulṭān 'Alī, a celebrated calligrapher, radically alters the position, providing a significant early date for its existence in Persia under its Frankish name. Sulṭān 'Alī says in his poem,[1]

> As a consequence of the grievous Frankish scourge
> I was crippled by the hand of the pox
> For several years without interruption
> I was worn out with its complaint
> With a broken heart and no trace of strength (in the body).

The poet composed his poem in 920 H. (A.D. 1514–15), at the age of 74 (he died, it appears, in 926 H. (A.D. 1520)). If we consider that his youth, during which he claims to have suffered from the

[1] V. Minorsky, *Calligraphers and Painters* (Washington, 1959), p. 124. I am indebted to Professor Minorsky for the Persian original of the essential passage,

که زدست بلای شوم فرنگ شده بودم زدست آبله لنگ

pox, lay between the ages of 15 and 40 (though more likely 15 and 30), this gives a dating of 867 H. (A.D. 1462) to 892 H. (A.D. 1486). The importance of this dating, if it be reliable, is that it carries us back before 1493, the year in which Columbus returned from America, whence, according to one strongly supported theory, venereal syphilis is supposed to have been brought to Europe.

"Persian fire" (*nār Fāris* or *al-nār al-Fārisī(yah)*) is in itself no new term, being cited by Dozy[1] from the Glossary to the *Manṣūrī* of Rhazes, i.e. in the late third or early fourth century H., though, at this date, there is no reason to identify it with syphilis. A little later than this the *Mafātīḥ al-'ulūm*[2] defines it in the words, "the Persian fire is swellings[3] filled with serous fluid which come out after itching and inflammation (*al-nār al-Fārisīyah nuffākẖāt mumtali'ah bi-mā' raqīq takẖruj ba'd ḥikkah wa-lahīb*)". Perhaps then the Frankish chancre was mistaken at first for an ailment already known. Tha'ālibī,[4] who flourished during the latter part of the fourth/tenth century and early fifth/eleventh century, alludes to Persian fire and Balkh ulcers (*al-qurūḥ al-Balkẖīyah*). In this last connexion one may speculate as to whether such non-venereal forms as yaws, if existing in the Islamic world at this period, may have been known to medical authors under such names as the Balkh ulcer. Yaws[5] is stated to be common at the present time in parts of Northern Yemen, and I saw what was said to be a bad case of this condition at al-Qārah (the headquarters of the Imām al-Badr at the time of writing); in this case the whole heel was raw flesh and the only cover was a rag and a little string of garlic onions worn round the ankle.

It will be remarked that in all these notices there is no mention of gonorrhoea. Of this strange omission I can offer no explanation, but the very lack of data requires exploration, and notices of it or descriptions would surely be interesting to discover.

[1] *Supplément*, s.v. *nār*, érésipèle, though I should like proof of the identification.

[2] G. van Vloten, *Liber mafâtîh al-olûm* (al-Khwārizmī) (Leiden, 1895), p. 158.

[3] Lane calls *nuffākẖah* an inflation of a humour caused by a disease.

[4] De Jong, edit. *Laṭā'if al-ma'ārif* (Leiden, 1867), p. 132.

[5] P. W. R. Petrie and K. S. Seal, *A Medical Survey of the Western Aden Protectorate 1939–1940*, Colonial Office, Middle East no. 66, p. 95 have some notes on yaws in the Yemen and Aden Protectorate. A condition resembling yaws which a European physician described as "Zabīdī syphilis" is mentioned, possibly "Bejel", non-venereal syphilis. It attacks the nose sometimes leaving a gap where the nose was, generally in the second or third decade of life (R. Napier, letter, *British Medical Journal* (London, October 1936), p. 738.

NOTICES ON THE "FRANKISH CHANCRE" (SYPHILIS)

From the Yemen within very recent years, prior, it is true, to the revolution, though it might well survive it, is a strange piece of folk-medicine reported by Muḥammad 'Alī Luqmān.[1] There, he says, syphilis is spoken of as "Father" illness (*maraḍ ab*), its "father" being one of the saiyids in al-Mukhā (Mocha) or a place in the Yemen called Yakhtul. "All that the 'father' does is to buy the disease." He merely advises the sick man to confine himself to dry food (*al-'aish al-jāff*) and sesame-oil (*salīṭ*). This belief, he says, continues to be held, despite the proved efficacy of the treatment with penicillin and 606. Ulcers (*qurūḥ*) generally, he remarks, are cured by onion and garlic skin and *kāt* (*sic* for *qāt*?). My friend Saiyid Muḥammad 'Abduh Ghanem comments that one pays the "*abū*" and he buys the sickness, and that the selling of a disease is a common popular notion.

Stace[2] some sixty years ago refers to Balad al-Muḥibb as a place in the Yemen where syphilis is cured, but Saiyid M. A. Ghanem tells me that there is a *mabraz*, a sort of salon as it were, *mabraz al-Muḥibb*, the present Muḥibb being Saiyid Muḥammad al-Amīn, at Balaksah Street, about two streets south-west of the Za'farān Road in Aden, in the vicinity of the Bā Nuṣair Mosque. The Muḥibb is usually a Saiyid from Mocha who is believed to possess the ability to cure diseases common among fishermen, especially venereal disease. The treatment of the latter usually takes the form of a diet of dates and oil with sandbaths at Ḥuqqāt (Holkat Bay), though, with the recent construction there, that must be difficult nowadays. Saiyid M. A. Ghanem thinks that *Muḥibb* is a special title or surname assumed by the Saiyids from Mocha because they belong to a particular class or ancestry endowed with miraculous powers to cure certain ailments. The present *Muḥibb*, like many if not all of his predecessors, is a Shādhilī.[3]

In the Aden Protectorate syphilis is known as *al-Ṭair*, the bird, and gonorrhoea as *al-Raddah*, though what the origin of these two terms is I am entirely ignorant. Both diseases are very un-

[1] *'Adan taṭlub al-ḥukm al-dhātī* (Aden, n.d., but *c.* 1954–5), p. 41. Among various medical curiosities he describes, a person afflicted with boils urinates on them, and often sick persons drink their urine because in their view sickness is uncleanliness (*rijs*), and only uncleanliness like it can remove it. In cases of smallpox the urine of the afflicted person is poured on his eyes to prevent blindness. The author only speaks of these practices to inveigh against them.

[2] E. V. Stace, *English–Arabic Vocabulary* (London, 1893), p. 128.

[3] The Shādhilīs of Mocha, patron saints, as it were, of coffee (*qahwah Shādhilīyah*), are of course celebrated.

common in the country areas or, for instance, in the towns of Ḥaḍramawt of the interior; the same would not of course be true of the large ports. As I have noticed elsewhere,[1] when I asked if venereal diseases were found among and transmitted by the gypsy girls of Dathīnah my informant's answer was that they were not, since the country was clean and far from Aden. During the last ten years, with the vast development of travel and improvement of communications, coupled with the beginnings of disintegration of the older form of society, that happy condition may have to some extent altered, though as it has been accompanied also by a great increase in medical services in the territory, and as I think it would be *'aib* for a tribesman to return to his village so afflicted, the state of affairs may not have changed so very much.

On Socotra Island, according to a fairly recent report by Dr N. I. Corkhill, syphilis is still known as *Franjī*, which must surely be the old term of four and a half centuries ago still persisting. This it apparently also does in Oman, to judge from the Omani author al-Sālimī[2] who lived from 1869 to 1913, for in his long metrical compendium of Ibāḍī law,[3] discussing the causes which give a woman the option of annulment of her marriage (these being much the same as those adduced by the Shāfi'ī authors already cited, except in the case of syphilis), he says

يقع الخيار بالافرنج إن كان فيه او بذات الغنج
وقيل لا خيار لكن يمنع من وطئها لضرر قد يقع

Option comes about through *al-Ifranj*
When present in him, or through a woman with lovely eyes.[4]
It is said also (according to another view) that (in such case) option does not exist, but it is prohibited
To have intercourse with her on account of ill that may occur.

The editor remarks that *al-Faranj*/*Firanj* is syphilis (*maraḍ al-zuharī*). From the data already presented I surmise that the

[1] "The Ma'n "Gypsies" of the West Aden Protectorate", *Anthropos* (Posieux–Fribourg, 1961), LVI, 743.

[2] Cf. Brock. *Sup.* II, 823, but this should be supplemented by the biography in the *Jawhar al-niẓām*.

[3] Muḥ. b. 'Abdullāh...al-Sālimī, *Jawhar al-niẓām* (Cairo, 1345 H.), I, 186, edit. of Cairo, 1381 H., p. 184.

[4] Al-ghunj according to the commentator means *malāḥat al-'ainain*. It also means, however, amorous gesture, voluptuous movements.

second view quoted by al-Sālimī was a species of compromise which preceded the more categorical first view that he offers. It is clear, however, that this question must have been discussed by the legists of the Omani Ibāḍīs, and when their hardly known legal literature is examined we can confidently expect to find some data on syphilis. The point of interest would be to discover whether they attribute its arrival in their country to the Portuguese or to some other visitors to their coast.

ADDENDA

P.241/12 M.C-F. Volney, *Travels . . .*, London 1787, I, 247, "Another very general distemper at Cairo is that which the vulgar there call the *blessed evil*, and which we also improperly term the *Neapolitan disorder*: one half of Cairo is infected with it". Cf. C.S. Sonnini, *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt*, London, 1800, 260, 629, 673, speaking of whimsical names for the various venereal complaints, the general *embarek*, blessed, and the *goat disease* or *camel disease*. One treatment is to bury oneself in hot sand up to the neck for 20–30 days. Dr E.M. Sartain cites ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Shādhilī, *Bahjat al-ʿābidīn.*, Chester Beatty Ms. 4436, 48a, for a scholar "sick of the *ḥabb* (chancre) with which most of the people were afflicted", who died in 945/1539.

P.242/6 Ba 'l-Faqīh al-Shiḥrī has apparently copied this passage and that on *sh m n d lah* from Ibn al-Dayba', *al-Faḍl al-mazīd*, ed. Y. Chelhod, Ṣanʿā', 1983, 282 & 277.

P.243/fn.1 Cf. Rossi, *L'Arabo parlato*, 175. My field notes also have *ibn al-nās* in this sense.

P.250/6 I visited Yakhtul, a small coastal fishing village, and al-Mitaynah of the Muḥibb Sayyids where they treat venereal disease. See my "Tihāmah notes" in the Professor A.F.L. Beeston Festschrift, Oxford, 1991.